

Does God Always Answer Prayer?

One harmless looking but deadly trap that appears in great profusion in articles and books on prayer is that “*God always answer prayers.*”

This error is presented as a kind of all-purpose philosophic therapy to prevent any disappointed Christian from suffering too great a shock when it becomes evident to them that their prayer expectations are **not** being fulfilled.

The explanation is that God always answers prayers, either by saying yes or by saying no, or substituting something else for the desired favour.

This is really a neat trick to save the face of the petitioner whose request has been rejected for non-obedience.

Believing this is so very comforting.

Weak faith is saved from confusion.

The conscience is permitted to lie undisturbed.

But is this an honest explanation?

To have received an answered prayer as the Christian Bible uses the term, two things must be present.

- 1 A clear-cut request has to be made to God.
- 2 A clear-cut granting of that specific favour is evident.

When we go to God with a request for Him to modify an existing situation for us, that is He answers our prayer, two conditions must be met.

1 We must pray within the Will of God.

Matthew 6:25-34 [NIV] *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith!** So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

In God’s eyes and within His Will the spiritual, eternal life, is far more important than this limited physical life.

If our requests are directed to our entry into His Kingdom, created family, or our being a vehicle that He uses to bring others into His Kingdom, we can be sure of a favourable reply.

Also as a bonus all we need but omitted to request will be added.

James 4:3 [NIV] *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”*

Such prayers will **not** be heard by God for they are **not** motivated by love for Him or our fellow human beings.

2 We must be living lives that are pleasing to God.

God has **not** placed Himself under any obligation to honour the requests of worldly, carnal or disobedient Christians.

God hears and answers **only** the prayers of those who walk in His way of life.

1 John 3:21-23 [NIV] *“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.”*

If our conscience is clear, having confessed and been cleansed of the penalty of our sins, we can pray with confidence.

John 15:4-8 [NIV] *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

We must be living a life that is in intimate union with Jesus Christ and producing the fruits that such a union will produce.

God wants us to pray and He wants to hear and answer our prayers, but He makes use of our requests in prayer as a form of loving discipline.

To receive answers we must meet God’s terms.

If we neglect His love commandments and the commission He has given us to make disciples for Jesus Christ [see **Matthew 28:19-20**] our petitions will **not** be honoured.

God will **only** alter situations at the request of obedient and humble disciples.

The “*God always answers prayers*” psychology leaves the praying person without discipline, and hence no maturing in holiness.

They will **never** learn how to wrestle with and wait on God.

They will **never** know maturing correction.

They will **not** hear the voice of God calling them to fulfil certain tasks for Him.

They will **never** arrive at the place where they are morally and spiritually fit to have their prayers answered.

God will **only** hear and answer our prayers on His terms, because He is Sovereign and the initiative is always His as our Sovereign Creator God.